

Grammar Crammer: Active and Passive Voice

Active and passive voice refers to whether where the subject of the sentence is placed. If the subject of the sentence is placed in the beginning of the sentence, it is referred to as the ACTIVE voice. If the subject of the sentence comes after the verb, it is referred to as PASSIVE. Generally, the active voice is preferred; as a writer, you cannot intermix the two types in a paragraph...choose to write in the active voice, or in the passive voice...but don't mix them together!

Notice the examples:

Active: John washed the car. (John is subject; comes before the verb "washed")

Passive: The car was washed by John. (John is now at the end of the sentence, even though he is still the washer).

Active: I ate the apple.

Passive: The apple was eaten by me.

Note: a Helping Verb has to be added to make a sentence passive.

Practice: Identify each sentence as active or passive.

1. The stapler was broken into several pieces.
2. The field was destroyed by the football players' cleats.
3. The tornado destroyed many homes.
4. Many new homes were destroyed by the tornado.
5. When riding a bike, protective gear should be worn by the rider.
6. We were checked on by our parents during the night.
7. Trees are decorated by children at Christmas time.
8. The boys decorated the Christmas trees this year.
9. The team was cheered on by many fans in the grandstands.
10. A hike was taken by our scout troop this weekend.

Now, rewrite the following sentences, making them Active instead of Passive.

11. The town of Lebanon is run by Mayor Sherry Capello.
12. Costumes need to be made by the parents for the musical next week.

Finally, identify which sentence shows a shift in voice.

13. The new office building was built by my Uncle Danny.
14. He finished the work in record time!
15. Sometimes, he had to work on weekends.
16. When he finished the building, everyone admired it!

